

Session Five

**Diabetes Detection: Could I Have
Diabetes Right Now and
Not Know It?**

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The NDEP strongly encourages inviting a medical person (health care provider or certified diabetes educator) to participate in any sessions that you conduct to provide support for the discussion and to answer any specific medical questions that may arise.

Background

Approximately 18.2 million people in the United States have diabetes, and about one-third of them don't even know that they have it. Diabetes may go unrecognized for many years because the person with diabetes either experiences no symptoms, doesn't tell his or her doctor about the symptoms, or thinks that the symptoms are from something else (such as getting older or feeling stressed).

Objectives

1. To discuss how diabetes can damage the body silently when a person does not know he or she has it.
2. To use the Diabetes Detection Initiative Risk Test to determine whether one is at increased risk.
3. To describe the symptoms of diabetes.



Time needed for discussion: 30 to 45 minutes.

For instructions on borrowing *The Debilitator* film, see page 4 of this guide.

The handout *Diabetes Detection Initiative Risk Test* can be found at the end of this session (after page 44).

Materials

- DVD of the film *The Debilitator*.
- DVD player/TV monitor.
- Handout: *Diabetes Detection Initiative Risk Test* included in this discussion guide kit; make at least one copy for each participant. The brochure may also be downloaded from <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/ddi/resources/risktest.pdf>.
- Optional: Flipchart or blackboard for writing down key words from discussion.

Method

- Conduct a facilitated discussion (group discussion with a leader asking stimulation questions).
 - Play the film, or select scenes from the film as needed.
1. **Tell the group:** I'd like you to think about how Calvin was diagnosed with diabetes.
 2. **Ask:** When was he first told that he had diabetes?



Make sure that the discussion covers the following points:

- He was told one year earlier by another doctor but then never went back to that doctor.
- He had been given medicines and a blood glucose machine but had never used them



DVD

3. **Tell the group:** Think back to the doctor's office scene in the film. *[You may consider replaying this scene to refresh participants' memories.]*
4. **Ask:** How did Calvin respond when Dr. Goodson asked him if he had ever been told that he had diabetes?



Make sure that the discussion brings out these three things that Calvin said or asked:

- “I didn’t believe it, so I never went back.” (He just didn’t believe it.)
- “Isn’t diabetes just what we call sugar?” (He didn’t take the diagnosis seriously.)
- “Am I dying?” (Now he is really worried because the diabetes has gone on for so long.)

5. **Ask:** What did Calvin tell his family after that first doctor’s appointment? Did he tell them later that the first doctor had told him that he had diabetes?



Make sure that the discussion brings out the following points:

- Calvin’s wife first learns that Calvin has diabetes when she sees his medicines from Dr. Goodson’s office. He didn’t share much information with her from his appointment with the first doctor a year earlier.
- Calvin’s daughter asked, “Didn’t you have a blood glucose test a few months ago?” but it appeared that she thought that the results at that time were normal.

Note: In the dream, Calvin’s daughter seems to know that Calvin has diabetes, but later during the dinner conversation, it appears that the diagnosis is news to all of the family. Don’t get stuck on this point if participants express confusion about it. Suggest that dreams don’t show exactly what is happening in real life but instead show what is in a person’s subconscious—what a person is afraid of or worried about, or simply what’s on the person’s mind.

6. **Ask the group:** Can you see this same thing happening in your family? If you found out that you had diabetes, would you tell your family? Why or why not?

Responses might include

- Yes, we are very open in my family, and we talk about medical problems.
- No, people in my family don't want to worry one another (or worry Mom, or one particular person in the family), so we don't talk about problems.
- Yes, I couldn't keep being on medication a secret from my family, and I wouldn't want to.
- No, I would be ashamed. Or I'd be afraid I'd get an "I told you so" lecture, or that I'd be a bad example for my kids if I let them know I had diabetes.
- Yes, I'd be afraid that if I had a low blood sugar reaction or some problem, they wouldn't know what to do unless I'd told them about my diabetes.
- No, everyone would be worried all the time about me, or nagging me, and that would drive me crazy.
- Others?

Brainstorming Activity

Explore with the group what could be done to turn those "No, I wouldn't tell them" answers into "Yes, I would want to talk to them about my diabetes" answers.

1. **Ask:** Does anyone remember what symptoms of diabetes Calvin is having?

Answers might include:

- Tired all the time.
- Going to the bathroom a lot (urinating a lot).

2. **Ask:** Can anyone name other symptoms of diabetes?

Answers might include:

- Blurred vision.
- Thirsty all the time.

- Vaginal yeast infections in women.
 - Others?
3. **Ask:** Are there other things that can cause these symptoms?

Answers might include:

- Yes, lots of things, such as depression, getting older, or infections.
4. **Ask:** Do you think that a person could have diabetes and have no symptoms at all? *[Answer: Diabetes can occur with no symptoms, or the symptoms can be attributed to other causes.]*

Answers might include:

- Yes, diabetes can “sneak up” on you slowly, so you don’t notice the changes.
- Yes, a lot of those symptoms don’t show up until your blood sugar is very high.
- No, don’t you think a person could feel it if his or her blood sugar was up?

Note: Some people insist that they can “just tell” what their blood sugar is without measuring it. There is no scientific proof of this assertion, but it is probably not worthwhile to argue with participants about this point during this session. The point of the session is that it is possible to have diabetes and not know it; it is possible to have no symptoms while diabetes is silently causing damage.



Classroom Exercise

Pass out copies of the *Diabetes Detection Initiative Risk Test*. Ask participants to spend 5 minutes taking the test and figuring out their scores.

1. **Ask the group:** Now that you have taken this risk test, are any of you willing to share your feelings about talking to your doctor about getting tested for diabetes?



Homework Exercise

Suggest that participants take their copy of the risk test home to discuss it with family and friends and to encourage those people to take the test themselves and figure out their scores.



DIABETES DETECTION INITIATIVE

DIABETES. YOU COULD BE AT RISK TAKE THE TEST—KNOW YOUR SCORE!

Diabetes means your blood sugar (glucose) is too high. How would you know? Are you often thirsty, hungry, or tired? Do you urinate often? Do you have sores that heal slowly, tingling in your feet, or blurry eyesight? Even without these signs, you could still have diabetes.

Diabetes is a serious disease. It can cause heart attack or stroke, blindness, kidney failure, or loss of feet or legs. But diabetes can be controlled. You can reduce or avoid these health problems. Take the first step. Find out if you are at high risk.

Know your risk of having diabetes now. Answer these quick questions. For each Yes answer, add the number of points listed. All No answers are 0 points.

Question	Yes	No
Are you a woman who has had a baby weighing more than 9 pounds at birth?	1	0
Do you have a sister or brother with diabetes?	1	0
Do you have a parent with diabetes?	1	0
Find your height on the chart. Do you weigh as much as or more than the weight listed for your height? (<i>See chart on back</i>)	5	0
Are you under 65 years old and get little or no exercise in a typical day?	5	0
Are you between 45 and 64 years old?	5	0
Are you 65 years old or older?	9	0
Add Your Score		

These questions are from the American Diabetes Association's on-line "Diabetes Risk Test" (<http://www.diabetes.org/info/risk/risktest.jsp>).



At Risk Weight Chart

Height	Weight (Pounds)	Height	Weight (Pounds)
4'10	129	5'8	177
4'11	133	5'9	182
5'0	138	5'10	188
5'1	143	5'11	193
5'2	147	6'0	199
5'3	152	6'1	204
5'4	157	6'2	210
5'5	162	6'3	216
5'6	167	6'4	221
5'7	172		

Know Your Score

If you scored ...	then your risk is ...
10 or more points	High for having diabetes now. Please bring this form to your health care provider soon. If you don't have insurance and can't afford a visit to your provider, contact your local health department.
3 to 9 points	Probably low for having diabetes now. Keep your risk low. If you're overweight, lose weight. Be active most days, and don't use tobacco. Eat low-fat meals with fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. If you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure, talk to your health care provider about your risk for diabetes.

I Scored 10 or More

How Can I Get Tested for Diabetes?

If you have ...	then do this ...
Individual or group private health insurance	See your health care provider. If you don't have a provider, ask your insurance company about providers who take your insurance. Deductibles and co-pays will apply.
Medicaid	See your health care provider. If you don't have a provider, contact a state Medicaid office or contact your local health department.
Medicare	See your health care provider. Medicare will pay the cost if the provider has a reason for testing. If you don't have a provider, contact your local health department.
No insurance	Contact your local health department for more information about where you could be tested or call your local health clinic.